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USDA TO PROVIDE CONSOLIDATED SUBOFFICES ON AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 15—In an effort to ensure consistency and coordination in the services it provides to American Indians, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is establishing consolidated suboffices on American Indian reservations.

"Our policy is to provide opportunities for all rural Americans by coordinating our agricultural and rural development programs within each state, county, and tribal jurisdiction," said Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan. "The use of consolidated suboffices should help us accomplish that more efficiently and effectively."

The suboffices will be located at the tribal headquarters of those American Indian tribes that provide the necessary office space, and will offer programs and services of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration, and Soil Conservation Service.

A representative from each of the three agencies will staff suboffices at least one day per week, unless other agreements have been made between USDA and tribal officials.

To avoid duplication of effort on those reservations located in more than one county or state, officials from USDA, the appropriate county or state official and the tribe will enter into a cooperative agreement to provide the services needed.

Madigan said USDA and interested tribes are responsible for initiating certain actions to ensure that USDA's programs and services are provided on the reservations.

"USDA's responsibility is to take whatever actions are necessary to establish consolidated suboffices on tribal lands—where tribal officials have requested that we do so," he said.

Tribal officials are responsible for asking USDA to establish the consolidated suboffices on the reservations. They are also responsible for determining the suboffice site, providing necessary office space, and designating a specific tribal contact to work with USDA staff to implement this new policy.

Madigan said that to ensure a smooth implementation of this new policy, which is a result of provisions in the 1990 Farm Bill, USDA and tribal officials recently completed the first in a series of meetings they plan to hold around the country over the next several weeks.

The meeting was held July 16-18 in Lewistown, Mont. USDA representatives met with officials from seven Indian Reservations—the Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Fort Peck, Rocky Boys, Blackfeet, Flathead, and Fort Belknap—all of which are located in Montana.

"In the past, USDA's services on American Indian reservations haven't always been as consistent and coordinated as we would have liked," Madigan said.

"However, this new policy, plus the planned series of meetings, will go a long way toward ensuring we're providing more consistent services for those tribes which request our assistance."

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NEW BIOCONTROL FUNGUS STRAIN WORKS NEXT TO FUNGICIDE TO FIGHT CROP DISEASE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 16—A beneficial fungus that naturally controls seed rot diseases has been altered in a U.S. Department of Agriculture laboratory to resist the fungicide benomyl.

As a result, benomyl and the bioengineered fungus Gliocladium virens could work side by side to control a range of crop diseases, said geneticist Sue Mischke of USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

"Benomyl wipes out the beneficial fungus under normal circumstances," said Mischke. She and research associate Nina Ossanna inserted into G. virens a benomyl resistance gene from another fungus.

Lab results: at least one G. virens strain grows well in the presence of benomyl and continues to inhibit the organism that causes damping off disease. This disease causes rotting of seeds, seedlings and cuttings in cotton, beans, carrots and other crops, costing more than $1 billion a year.

Eventual field trials to prove the strain's effectiveness and economic practicality would require approval from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. Both

federal agencies also must approve farm use of any genetically-engineered organisms.

In lab tests, the natural G. virens reduced plant loss to damping off disease by 80 to 95 percent. That's similar to the disease control offered by chemical fungicides, Mischke said.

Benomyl offers excellent control of anthracnose, fusarium wilt, leafspot, powdery mildew and other diseases. And it is one of the fungicides still permitted by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mischke is testing the new G. virens on damping off organisms and cucumbers in a growth chamber to see how well the new strain protects a crop. She applies benomyl and the new fungus to soil containing the damping off disease, and then plants the cucumbers. Mischke is with the Biocontrol of Plant Diseases Laboratory at the ARS research center in Beltsville, Md.

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KUWAIT'S FOOD INDUSTRY FACES DIFFICULT CHALLENGES

WASHINGTON—Kuwait faces serious challenges after the Persian Gulf War, and U.S. food exporters doing business there should keep in mind that living and working conditions remain difficult, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service.

In an article in the September issue of FAS' AgExporter Magazine, U.S. agricultural trade officials Hovaguim M. Kizirian and Philip A. Letarte discuss the food and agriculture problems faced by citizens of Kuwait as they rebuild the country.

Earlier this summer, Kizirian and Letarte, who are stationed in nearby Bahrain, visited Kuwait to assess the country's food needs and food marketing situation. They report general conditions are improving, but Kuwait's food sector has been left in disarray. Only a small number of food importers and wholesalers are in operation, but more are re-opening weekly.

Fresh meat and eggs have been hard to find in Kuwait since the Iraqis destroyed or damaged dairy and poultry farms, Kizirian and Letarte reported. One company is importing livestock for slaughter in Kuwait. In addition, many greenhouses were abandoned, leaving Kuwait without an internal supply of fresh vegetables.

The report also states that Shuaiba is the only operating port in Kuwait. Its use is severely restricted because handling and storage facilities were either taken or destroyed by the Iraqis. Most food imports into the country, therefore, have been arriving by truck via Saudi Arabia or by ship from Dubai.

State-controlled or subsidized companies handle much of Kuwait's food needs. A small but growing number of established or new-to-market private food companies are importing food and other consumer products from firms in Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and Bahrain.

Government firms are supplying cooperatives and private retail outlets with fresh, frozen, and dry food products. The cooperatives are poorly stocked, even though they handled about 75 percent of Kuwait's food retailing before the invasion. Electric power has been restored to most of Kuwait City and its surroundings, and this has helped facilitate the importation and distribution of frozen and chilled foods.

Exporters doing business in Kuwait will find that the country is not yet back to normal, according to Kizirian and Letarte. Accommodations are hard to find, but one hotel near the U.S. Embassy and two near the airport are back in operation. Many restaurants outside hotels are not open because of damage incurred during the Iraqi occupation, as well as lack of staff. Kuwait International Airport is open, and flights are presently available through London, Bahrain, and Dubai.

For more information, contact Philip Letarte, U.S. Agricultural Trade Office, Manama, Bahrain; telephone (011-973) 714-151; FAX (011-973) 713-935.

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CCC SEEKS COMMENTS ON 1992 FARM PROGRAM COMMON PROVISIONS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 16—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation today asked for comments on provisions applicable to 1992 annual commodity programs. The provisions apply to wheat, feed grains, rice, upland cotton and extra long staple (ELS) cotton.

Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the CCC, said comments are sought on:

—what crops should not be permitted to be planted on "flexible" acreage;

—whether targeted option payments should be made available for wheat, feed grains, upland cotton and rice;

—whether to permit the planting of designated crops on up to half of the acreage required to be designated as acreage conservation reserve;

—whether to allow the planting of oats on acreage designated as ACR under wheat and feed grain programs;

—whether to allow the planting of conserving crops on ACR;

—whether malting barley should be exempted from the 1992 acreage reduction requirements;

—what percentage of estimated deficiency payments should be made available to producers of the 1992-1995 crops of wheat, feed grains, rice, upland cotton and ELS cotton.

CCC is proposing that 40 percent of the estimated deficiency payment rate be made available in advance to producers for the 1992-1995 crops and that no other crops be added to the list of crops that may not be planted on flexible acreage.

CCC also proposes that the following not be implemented for the 1992 crops: Targeted option payments, the planting of oats on ACR, the planting of conserving crops on ACR, malting barley exemptions.

Comments submitted on the foregoing provisions should include:

—justification for designation;

—the impact on farm income and CCC outlays; and

—production practices, costs and market prices;

Additional information will be published in the Aug. 19 Federal Register.

Comments must be received by Sept. 13 by the Director, CAD, USDA/ASCS, Room 3741-S, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013. All comments will be available for public inspection in Room 3744 of the USDA'S South Building during regular business hours.

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USDA SEEKS FURTHER COMMENT ON COTTON MARKETING CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS' PROVISIONS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 16—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today asked for public comment on an interim rule to implement the Upland Cotton First Handler Marketing Certificate Program and the Upland Cotton User Marketing Certificate Program for marketing years 1991-1995.

In response to comments received since the June 18 publication of the proposed rule, several significant changes have been made. Accordingly, an interim rule is being published to give the public the opportunity to comment on the changes.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended by the 1990 Farm Bill, requires that the upland cotton first handler and user marketing certificate programs be implemented Aug. 1, 1991.

The 1990 Farm Bill extended the authority originally contained in the 1985 Farm Bill for a first handler marketing certificate program through July 31, 1996. USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation CCC will implement nearly the same as for the 1986 marketing year, except that first handler certificates may be exchanged for any commodity made available by CCC. (Certificates issued under the 1986 program could only be exchanged for upland or extra long staple cotton stocks). The interim rule provides details concerning eligible cotton, eligible first handlers, the upland cotton first handler agreement, payments and payment rates.

The 1990 Farm Bill includes a new competitiveness provision for upland cotton requiring the issuance of marketing certificates to qualifying domestic users and exporters on documented sales made during the week following a consecutive 4-week period in which the lowest-priced U.S. growth of cotton quoted for delivery in northern Europe (U.S.-Northern Europe price) exceeds the average of the cheapest five growths of cotton quoted for delivery in northern Europe (Northern Europe price) by more than 1.25 cents per pound in each of the four weeks.

The User Marketing Certificate Program provisions include:

—An eligible domestic user is a person regularly engaged in the business of opening bales of eligible upland cotton for the purpose of manufacturing cotton products in the U.S. and who has entered into an agreement with CCC to participate in the program. An eligible exporter is a person, including a producer or approved cooperative marketing

association, regularly engaged in selling eligible upland cotton for exportation from the U.S. who has entered into an agreement with CCC to participate in the program.

—Eligible cotton will be domestically produced upland cotton baled lint, including Below Grade cotton, loose (rebaled cotton samples), and reginned (processed) motes, which is consumed by an eligible domestic user between Aug. 1, 1991 and July 31, 1996, inclusive, during a Friday through Thursday period immediately following a week in which a payment rate is in effect or which is sold for export by an eligible exporter under a written contract entered into between Aug. 1, 1991 and July 31, 1996, inclusive, during a Friday through Thursday period immediately following a week in which a payment rate is in effect and which is exported by not later than Sept. 30, 1996.

—Cotton will be considered to have been consumed by the domestic user when the bale is "opened" for the purpose of manufacturing the cotton into cotton products in the United States. The opening of a bale occurs when the bagging and ties are removed. Cotton will be considered to have been exported by the exporter when a certified bill of lading is issued.

—Ineligible upland cotton is: cotton for which a payment under this program was previously made; cotton obtained from CCC inventory through the exchange of commodity certificates; imported cotton; raw (unprocessed) motes; semi-processed motes; and textile mill wastes.

—The payment rate will be based on the amount that the U.S.- Northern Europe price exceeds the Northern Europe price by more than 1.25 cents per pound during the fourth week of a consecutive 4-week period in which the U.S.- Northern Europe price exceeded the Northern Europe price by more than 1.25 cents per pound. The interim rule details how such payment rates will be established and applied.

—For domestic users, the date the bale is "opened" is the date used for determining the payment rate. For exporters, the date of the sales contract is used.

—For domestic users, the weight for payment is based on the net weight (gross weight minus the weight of bagging and ties) of eligible upland cotton bales opened on which settlement for payment was based ("landed mill weight"). For exporters, the weight for payment is based on the shipping warehouse weight or the gin weight if the cotton is not placed in a warehouse, unless the exporter obtains and pays the cost of

having all the bales in the shipment reweighed by a licensed weigher and furnishes a copy of the certified reweights.

—Payments are made available upon application and submission of supporting documentation. Domestic users must submit proof of purchases and consumption of eligible cotton. Exporters must submit proof of export of eligible cotton.

—Except under specified circumstances, any contract entered into by an exporter that is canceled or amended to reduce the contract quantity must be replaced by the exporter with a subsequent contract (''replacement contract'') designated by the exporter at the time a copy of the replacement contract is submitted to CCC. Optional origin export contracts that are canceled/amended must be replaced with either an optional origin export contract or a contract to export U.S. cotton.

—Upland Cotton Domestic User/Exporter Agreements may be obtained from: Cotton Branch, CRD, Kansas City Commodity Office, P.O. Box 419205, Kansas City, Missouri 64141-6205, telephone (816) 926-6662.

Details appear in the Aug. 21 Federal Register. Comments must be received no later than Sept. 20 by the Director, Commodity Analysis Division, USDA-ASCS, Room 3741-S, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013. Comments will be available for public inspection in Room 3760 of USDA's South Building during regular business hours.

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USDA PROPOSES ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS FOR CITRUS FRUIT SHIPPED FROM TEXAS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 19—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to add two alternative treatments that may be used by Texas citrus growers to protect the rest of the country from Mexican fruit flies (Mexflies). In addition, USDA is proposing to increase the number of destinations for which treatment is required.

''The proposed new treatments would provide Texas citrus growers alternative ways to prepare their citrus fruit for shipment to areas where the Mexfly could become established,'' said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. ''Texas growers have only limited facilities for treating their fruit using treatments approved so far. Tests have shown the new treatments provide

equally good protection for citrus growers in other regions.''

Glosser said the new treatments would theoretically be permitted in any area quarantined for Mexflies. At present, however, the citrus-growing region of Texas is the only area that is under quarantine and growers there are the only ones who would be using the new treatments.

One of the new procedures would involve treating the groves with insecticide during preharvest and harvest periods instead of treating the fruit after harvest. The treatment consists of three or more applications of malathion bait spray at 6- to 10-day intervals, starting at least 30 days before harvest and continuing through the harvest period.

For the other new procedure, citrus would be placed in a treatment chamber and fumigated with methyl bromide. Previously approved treatments involve exposing the fruit to cold.

The new regulation would slightly expand the areas recognized as needing protection from untreated, infested fruit because Mexflies could become established there. The new areas are American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the previously unregulated parts of Louisiana.

Notice of the proposal is being published in the Aug. 20 Federal Register. Comments will be accepted if they are received on or before Sept. 19.

An original and three copies of written comments referring to docket 88-148 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development; PPD-APHIS-USDA; Room 804 Federal Building; 6505 Belcrest Road; Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Comments may be inspected at USDA, Rm. 1141-S, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

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COW'S BREATH, OTHER WEAPONS TO SQUELCH MOSQUITOES

WASHINGTON, Aug. 19—Cow's breath is helping mosquitoes keel over and die in U.S. Department of Agriculture laboratories. But the buzzing insects aren't repulsed by the odor from cow mouths. Quite the opposite—octenol, an element in ruminant breath, so attracts mosquitoes that scientists are using it to lure the insects to death traps.

Entomologist Daniel L. Kline of USDA's Agricultural Research Service envisions mosquito control officials one day attracting large numbers of mosquitoes to baited targets. An insecticide, permethrin, finishes off the pests—thus avoiding large-scale spraying to fight mosquitoes. Kline works at the agency's Medical and Veterinary Entomology Research Laboratory, Gainesville, Fla.

A blend of octenol and carbon dioxide attracted three to 10 times more mosquitoes than either compound alone in field cage tests, Kline said. Mosquito control districts normally use carbon dioxide alone to monitor mosquito populations, he said.

A compressed gas cylinder meters the carbon dioxide as it is released next to a bottle of octenol. Octenol vapors are released from a wick in the bottle to blend and create the potent lure. Kline said he is working on ways to improve this technique for use in the field.

His new finding appears in a report in the August issue of Agricultural Research magazine.

"We believe the octenol attracts mosquitoes from far away, while carbon dioxide attracts those that are closer," Kline said. "We think mosquitoes home in on octenol and other components of cow's breath to find a blood host."

He said octenol was originally studied in Africa by scientists trying to control disease-carrying tsetse flies in developing countries.

Before control districts can use octenol and carbon dioxide to trap mosquitoes, Kline must figure out how much octenol needs to be released from a trap wick for ideal results, and simplify the standard trap so it can be produced more cheaply.

So far Kline has studied the octenol-carbon dioxide blend against the salt marsh mosquito, Aedes taeniorhynchus, a wetland breeder that occurs as far north as New Jersey. A trapping method would be welcomed, he said, because it would offer an alternative to currently used chemical sprays.

Octenol also attracts four other mosquito species of 69 Kline tested, including Psorophora columbiae, Mansonia titillans and Coquillettidia perturbans—all implicated in transmitting encephalitis viruses.

Other findings in mosquito research at the lab:

* A parasite, Edhazardia aedis, could be a new biological control for mosquitoes breeding in old tires, tree holes and other water-holding containers, according to entomologists Albert Undeen and James J.

Becnel. An example of this kind of mosquito: the yellow and dengue fever transmitter, Aedes aegypti.

Unsuspecting mosquito larvae ingest the spore of the parasite. Infection begins. Some infected larvae die, but most emerge as infected adults. Females produce infected eggs. Some larvae from those eggs die, releasing the original type of spore which, in turn, infects other larvae.

Surviving female larvae mature to also lay infected eggs. "This transmission from females to their offspring is what makes this such a good candidate for biocontrol of mosquitoes breeding in containers," Undeen said. "With these breeders, you must have a pathogen that the mosquito itself carries around because you can't find all the little breeding places," Becnel said.

In laboratory tests, the parasite infects and kills 100 percent of larvae in a container, depending on the dosage of spores used. But the researchers don't expect control quite that good in the field, generation after generation. Small-scale field tests may begin soon, if the Environmental Protection Agency approves them.

* Permethrin, when applied to tents, reduced the total number of mosquitoes and the number of bites people inside received, new studies show. Entomologist Carl E. Schreck said, "For up to nine months, study subjects got either zero bites or very few."

He kept the tents outside for a year straight—a situation that probably wouldn't occur for the average camper or even military personnel. "That should give you some idea of how potent the treatment is," he said.

As a result of previous studies done by Schreck, this mosquito-killing synthetic pyrethroid is approved for application to civilian clothing in 35 states and has EPA registration for military use for application to clothing. It protected troops in the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Storm.

* In a new project, Schreck and colleagues are trying to answer that age-old, nagging question: why do mosquitoes absolutely terrorize you, while your next door neighbor gets relatively few bites?

Lab volunteers have been tested to see who attracted the most hungry mosquitoes and the least.

If the scientists can discover what mosquitoes respond to when searching for a blood meal, they could find a chemical to make people less attractive. They also will consider whether dietary factors affect the insect's attraction to different people, Schreck said.

* Computer simulation models have been developed by engineer Danel G. Haile and entomologist Dana A. Focks. MALSIM predicts malaria transmission by Anopheline mosquitoes, taking into account certain weather patterns and different control strategies.

It shows, for example, how many troops will get the disease if they don't protect themselves with permethrin-treated uniforms and the repellent DEET.

Another model, PCSIM, simulates population dynamics of Psorophora columbiae, the riceland mosquito, and CIMSIM does the same for water container-inhabiting mosquitoes such as Aedes aegypti. These programs also predict insect numbers based on weather conditions and control measures.

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TREES TRAP EXCESS CARBON DIOXIDE, HELP PREVENT GLOBAL WARMING

WASHINGTON, Aug. 21—Trees can help keep the Earth's temperature under control, according to a recently published study by a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist in Phoenix, Ariz.

"My study shows that when trees grow in air containing twice as much carbon dioxide as is now in our atmosphere, they'll trap over three times as much carbon dioxide as they normally do," said Sherwood B. Idso, a physicist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service. "When trees trap carbon dioxide, or CO2, they're removing it from the atmosphere."

He added many researchers believe that sometime in the mid-21st century the Earth's atmosphere will contain twice as much CO2 as in preindustrial times.

Idso's report on the study appears in the current issue of the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society.

In the study, Idso exposed eight genetically identical sour orange trees to either the current concentration of atmospheric CO2—about 360 parts per million (ppm)—or to air enriched with an extra 300 ppm.

After three years, he found the trees that received the extra CO2 were almost three times larger than the trees growing in regular air.

"Trees are Earth's most important living reservoir for atmospheric carbon dioxide," said Idso, who works at ARS' U.S. Water Conservation

Laboratory in Phoenix. "However, CO2 is a gas that some people fear will cause a 'greenhouse effect'—and therefore global warming—if its concentrations continue to increase."

The greenhouse effect is the theory that Earth's atmosphere is retaining more solar heat because human activity is producing more heat-absorbing trace gases—like CO2, chlorofluorocarbons and methane.

While humans continue to pump CO2 into the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels, Idso speculates that trees eventually will create a near equilibrium of that gas in the atmosphere by absorbing as much CO2 as humans produce.

"To help keep CO2 in check, we'll need at least the same number of trees or more in the next century that we have now," Idso said. People also would have to curb production of chlorofluorocarbons and methane gases.

Trees, like all green plants, grow by a process known as photosynthesis. When the sun shines, the trees take in CO2 and use the carbon to make sugars. At night, they expend energy and lose some carbon.

Idso discovered that the trees growing in the extra CO2 more than doubled their photosynthetic rate during the day and slowed their nightly carbon loss by about one-third.

While the experiment only involved sour orange trees, Idso said, "We can expect most trees to respond in the same way, based upon detailed study of seasonal variations in the air's CO2 content." However, he stressed, additional research is needed to prove this point.

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USDA PROPOSES FEE INCREASES FOR FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GRADING SERVICES

WASHINGTON, Aug. 21—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to raise fees and revise methods for calculating certain fees charged for fresh fruit and vegetable grading and certification services at terminal markets.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said USDA is proposing the fee changes to offset the increased

costs associated with employee salaries, benefits and inflation since the last fee increase in March 1986.

The proposed fee increases are as follows:

—from the current $50 to $62 for quality and condition inspections for each over-half carlot equivalent up to a full carlot equivalent;

—from the current $42 to $52 for quality and condition inspections for each half carlot equivalent or less;

—from the current $42 to $52 for condition inspections for each overhalf carlot equivalent up to a full carlot equivalent;

—from $38 to $47 for condition inspections for each half carlot equivalent or less;

—from $25 to $31 per hour for inspections performed for other purposes during the grader's regularly scheduled work week;

—from $12.00 to $15.50 for the overtime or holiday premium hourly rate charged for all inspections performed outside the grader's regularly scheduled work week;

—from $2.25 for each set of five or less copies to $5.00 per copy for additional copies of inspection certificates.

The proposed fee changes and the revised methods for calculating fees will be published in the Aug. 21 Federal Register. Comments on the proposed rules, received no later than Sept. 20, should be sent to the Fresh Products Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, Room 2056-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Copies of the proposal and further information may be obtained from Douglas C. Bailey at the same address; telephone (202) 447-2333.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

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